

AF-111
ON FILE A-6

THE NEW YORK TIMES

6 April 1983

Link Seen to Recent Slaying of French Agent

By E. J. DIONNE Jr.

Special to The New York Times

PARIS, April 5 — The decision today by the French Government to expel 47 Soviet officials has focused attention on the unsolved murder of a French counterespionage officer on Feb. 15.

Intelligence officials and diplomats said new information made public this week had raised the possibility that the officer, Lieut. Col. Bernard Nut, was killed by a double agent. Colonel Nut was reportedly involved in intelligence work in Italy and, according to some accounts, helped provide information to the Italian authorities on a connection between Bulgarian intelligence and the attempt on the life of Pope John Paul II in 1981.

Colonel Nut has also been credited with providing information to the Italians that led to the arrest of Viktor Pronin, a reputed Soviet agent who was attached to the Rome office of Aeroflot, the Soviet airline. Mr. Pronin was arrested a few days before Colonel Nut's death.

Unidentified French officials told Agence France-Presse today that the expulsion of the Soviet officials was not

linked to the Nut murder. They pointed instead to the arrest last week of Patrick Guerrier, a 25-year old archivist, for industrial espionage. But other accounts by Agence France-Presse later raised possible links between Colonel Nut's death and the expulsions.

Colonel Nut's body was found in snow off a quiet mountain road about 40 miles north of Nice. His car had been spotted by a snow-plow operator who then alerted the police.

Initially, his death was thought to be a suicide, and intelligence sources spread stories about Colonel Nut having been

depressed for some time.

But these explanations lost credibility because other members of the secret services said that he had been in a cheerful mood and because a revolver from which three shots had been fired was found six feet away from the body.

Among the mysteries in the case is the fact no bullet was apparently found in the body, so that the connection with the revolver could not be firmly established. Other mysteries include the fact that the gas gauge on the French agent's car, which was found with its radio on, read empty, and that there was no sign of struggle in the snow in the area where the body was discovered.

New information made public this week suggested that he had been killed by someone he knew, possibly someone with whom he had eaten dinner. Ballistics tests showed that he had been shot from several yards away, and the autopsy found that he had eaten and drunk alcohol within three hours of his death.

Two leads are being pursued. One involves a romantic link between the colonel and a Lebanese woman. The other involves murder by a double agent. Press accounts and some officials have raised the possibility that Colonel Nut had discovered the identity of a double agent or that he had unearthed more information on the assassination attempt on the Pope.

The link between today's expulsions and Mr. Guerrier's arrest last week drew support from Western intelligence reports last week. These reports, which also predicted that the French were planning to expel a large number of Soviet officials, said many of those who would be expelled were experts in technical and scientific matters.

Mr. Guerrier had photocopied documents at an industrial company and passed them to officials of the Soviet Embassy whom the police identified on Friday as agents of the K.G.B.

French officials said the Guerrier case was one of a number of similar incidents involving the theft of French technology.

Reagan Administration officials have repeatedly argued that the Soviet Union has used Western technological information of a nonmilitary nature in its weapons programs.